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Establishing a Collection of Video Game Ephemera

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Project Number: DXF-0618

ESTABLISHING A COLLECTION OF VIDEO GAME EPHEMERA

An Interactive Qualifying Project Report
submitted to the faculty of
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Science
by

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Date: March 13, 2006

Professor David Finkel, Major Advisor

Abstract

Our project focused on creating an archive of video game related materials for the Gordon Library's Video Games Special Collection. Working with another project group, whose focus was video games and hardware, we developed a mission statement for the archive, created a system of guidelines for donations, defined a donations procedure, advertised the existence of the archive, and collected donations. We put together a substantial collection of items, which helped to build up a firm base for the archive.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Professor David Finkel for advising our project, and Professor Dean O'Donnell, for co-advising us.

We would like to thank Montana Foertsch, Eric Sutman, and Brandon Germain, for being an excellent group to work with.

We would also like to thank Henry Lowood, Steve Meretzky, and Rick Goodman, for their advice and early support of our project.

Finally, we would like to thank Rodney Obien, whose enthusiasm for bringing our project into his library was a constant delight.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Inspired by the extensive video game archive at Stanford University, Professor David Finkel set out to set up a similar collection here at WPI. Professor Finkel enlisted the help of Professor Dean O'Donnell to propose an IQP with the goal of creating an archive of historical video games and paraphernalia. Their hope was to have a new group of IQP students working on the project each year, building upon the work of previous groups to accumulate an authoritative resource for the new Interactive Media and Game Development major.

The initial wave of six applicants was split into two groups of three: the first group would collect games and gaming hardware, while the second would collect other game-related items. This report details the efforts of the second group, the so-called “Ephemera” group, to contribute to the start of a new video games special collection in the Gordon Library.

Over the course of three terms, we have worked closely with the “Games and Hardware” group to assemble a substantial starting point for the new archive. We worked together to create a mission statement and a priority system to organize our procedures for accepting donations. We helped advertise with flyers, newspaper articles, and personal contacts. We owe special thanks to Henry Lowood, curator for the Science and Technology Collections at Stanford University, Steve Meretzky, creator of many classic adventure games, and Rick Goodman, of the recently closed Stainless Steel Studios, for their

donations and advice, which were instrumental in our process of building up a meaningful collection.

This report is separated into three parts: a section on deciding what to do, a section on the process of collecting items, and a final conclusions section. The first part covers our mission statement and decisions about how to begin the collection. It shows how we decided what exactly we were going to collect, and how exactly we decided to split up the groups into a games and hardware group and a related materials group. The second part covers the actual methods we used to collect various items. It states our procedures for accepting donations, and the results of our five major sources of collection materials: campus advertising, Steve Meretzky, the Boston Post-Mortem, the IMGD Advisory Board, and library purchases. The last part outlines what we did and what remains to be done. We have accomplished a fair amount with regard to collecting items, establishing procedures, and making helpful personal contacts, but there are always more things to collect and more people to contact. The conclusions section makes note of these things and two important issues we unfortunately made little progress in: the issue of how to go about presenting the archive for public use, and the issue of preserving original pieces of video game history for years to come.

We believe the Gordon Library Video Games Special Collection is off to a good start, and we hope future groups can build upon what we have done to make something the WPI community can truly be proud of.

2. DECIDING WHAT TO DO

We were eager to immediately start collecting games and putting them on display in the library for people to play, but we first needed to take care of two major project management issues. The first issue was the problem of deciding what exactly we were going to collect. We needed to know specifically what items we would accept as donations and what kind of donations we would need to reject. To provide focus for what would be included in our collection, we created our mission statement and our “tier system” hierarchy of item values. Next, we needed to sort out was to find the best way to manage six people in one IQP; we eventually decided on having two separate groups as described in the division of labor section below. In an effort to find answers to our questions about running a library video game collection, we contacted Henry Lowood, the curator of the Stanford collection that inspired the creation of our own archive.

2.1 Mission Statement

At the start of any project, it is important to outline what exactly it is that you hope to accomplish. When this project began, we had a rough idea as to what the goal of this project was: we knew we were going to start a collection for the library that had something to do with video games. Very early on, we researched other archives that are similar to what we were hoping to accomplish with our archive. With some help from Rodney, we quickly discovered that most archives have some sort of a mission statement that lays out the goals and purpose of the archive. During A term, one of our major tasks was the creation of this mission statement.

In order to be useful, the mission statement must describe exactly what we hope to accomplish with our archive. After many revisions and much debate with the help of our advisors, we came up with our mission statement.

"To preserve video games and related materials, in order to provide an insight into the unique culture that formed around video games, and to provide an educational resource."

When we signed up for the project last year, our main goal was to develop a video-game related archive with the library to assist the new Interactive Media and Game Design major. Making sure students and professors have access to the material in our archive was one of our major goals, and the statement "to provide an educational resource" in our mission statement reflects that goal. We feel that the contents of our archive should be available to both students for research and to professors who wish to use our archive as a teaching aid. We decided that adding that directly into our mission statement will make it clear to anyone who uses our archive that it is for educational purposes. Since the archive is meant to help educate, it is clearly not just a collection of games and game-related materials that is to be kept on glass shelves to be displayed to the public but never used.

Our second goal is preservation. It became apparent in our research very early on that the video-game related archives in existence before ours either did not have any preservation goals, or in the case of the Digital Game Archive, did not have any intention to preserve original, physical copies of games and related material. In our opinion, game preservation is just as important as film preservation, and we are troubled by the idea that 20 years from now it might be impossible to find a working cartridge of Mario 64 or a

Nintendo 64 system to play it on. For these reasons, we decided to make preservation a goal in our archive and that is reflected in the mission statement by the wording "To Preserve".

Our third goal was a lot harder to put into words than the other 2 goals. We don't want the archive to just be a bunch of lifeless cartridges and disks, or data stored on hard-drives, we want the archive to show that gaming isn't just sitting down at a console inserting a disk and playing the game. We want the archive to show people who view the archive in the future more than just the games themselves, but also give them a feel for the atmosphere surrounding gaming at the time. An obvious example is the Everquest culture. To many people, Everquest is not just a game; it is an entire world and social network. If our archive were only to include a copy of Everquest, in thirty years when Everquest is no more, people viewing the archive and seeing just the box would not really understand what Everquest was. However, if we include a flyer for an Everquest Fan Faire along with the game box, the viewer will get a better idea of what Everquest was. This goal is represented in the mission statement by the wording "in order to provide an insight into the unique culture that formed around video games."

The final part of our mission statement actually explains what we want to collect. Our scope document and tier system explain our criteria for inclusion in greater detail, but we have to articulate that in the mission statement as well. Since we wanted to include both the games themselves, and some items that will show some of the culture around the

games, it was fairly simple to come up with "video games and related materials" as a quick overview of what our archive actually consists of.

2.2 The Tier System

Once we determined the general focus for the collection, we began drafting a more specific set of guidelines for acquiring assets. In order to keep the collection focused, we wanted to develop a system that would help determine future groups decide whether or not an item belonged in the collection.

By creating the tier system, shown in full in Appendix A4, we have outlined four levels of potential donations. Items in the first tier are items that embody the primary goals of the collection. In the second tier, we have placed items that are not as crucial to the collection as first tier items, but which we would still actively seek out. Items that we might seek out if time and funds permitted fall into tier three. In the bottom tier are items that we would not mind having in the archive but would not spend time or money acquiring.

As a result of creating the tier system, we now have an easy way of deciding whether or not we wish to accept a donation. If a donor offers a questionable item, the party accepting the donation can refer to the tier system and determine whether or not the item fits in the scope of the collection.

Though we are fairly pleased with the way the tier system turned out, it has one major flaw. Because we did not want to deny valuable items places in the collection by over-

specifying what items we would accept, we made the wording too vague, which may lead to confusion. Specifically, we are concerned that the top level tier might be read as "any video game that meets one of these criteria" and not "any game or game-related item that meets one of these criteria." Future groups may wish to reword this in order to underline the fact that this category does include noteworthy ephemera.

In our opinion, future groups would do well to refer to the tier system. By following it carefully, they will be able to expand the collection into the archive we envision. In the event that the collection secures funding, future groups will be able to refer to the tier system to determine what the money would be most wisely spent on.

2.3 Group-wise Division of Labor

In D-term of 2005, six students applied to take part in the newly proposed History of Video Games IQP. Because the project advisors wanted to get many students involved in the project but felt that a group of six people would be too large, they opted to accept each applicant into two separate but related projects. One of the initial tasks of the two groups was to agree upon a dividing line that would allow them to work independently of each other. The following sections outline our group's reasoning in favor of separating into a "Games and Hardware" group and a "Related Materials" group.

2.3.1 Possible Divisions of Labor and Reasoning for Our Choice

Before the project started, it was understood that both groups would need to find some way to split up the work. The first suggestion was to create a dividing line between the two primary gaming platforms: PCs and consoles. However, once the project was

officially underway, we began to realize that this particular division of labor might not adequately cover everything that would need to be included in a video game archive. Would simpler hand-held games be included with consoles or not included at all? What would we do with posters, magazines, design documents, action figures, and other related items that were sure to find ways into our collection? When we realized that our original plan was not quite enough, we set out to find a better way to split the workload between the two groups.

After some thought, we reasoned our way down to two possible divisions: Games vs. “Ephemera” and Collection vs. Setup. In the first method, one group would be responsible for collecting games and the hardware necessary to run them, and the second group would be responsible for collecting all video game-related items, collectively (and possibly inaccurately) referred to as “ephemera.” Both groups would need to work together to assemble a display in the library. In the second method, one group would be responsible for collecting everything, while the second group would be responsible for cleaning things up and taking care of everything needed to create an actual archive and display from the collected items. Our group's full reasoning for choosing the “Games vs. Ephemera” method can be found in Appendix A1. Both groups agreed without much deliberation, and this method was officially adopted as our working division of labor.

2.3.2 Results of Our Decision

Once donations started coming in, we started to see the results of our decision. There seemed to be a much greater interest in donating games and hardware than ephemera. The few design documents we managed to collect came from personal contact with game

developers at the Boston Post-Mortem, and most other ephemera was donated by members of our IQP group. While we still think that splitting the groups up the way we did works fairly well, we have found that each group needs different types of advertising to be effective. Flier and newspaper advertising are good enough for collecting games and hardware, but a good collection of ephemera will probably need to be built up by spending money and contacting developers personally. One of our group members theorized that people may eventually complete, get bored with, or otherwise have no more use for a game and feel better about donating the physical game media than about donating a piece of ephemera which was meant to be a collector's item. In the end, it may turn out that money is the only way to get people to part with their prized Quake posters.

2.4 Advice From Henry Lowood

During the early stages of our project, we sought guidance from Dr. Henry Lowood, curator of Stanford University's History of Science and Technology Collections. As part of his job as curator, Dr. Lowood manages two collections containing video games: the Stephen M. Cabrinety Collection and the Green Library Media Room. At this point in time, his work makes him one of the few people with experience in creating the sort of archive we want to establish.

On the advice of our advisor, we worked to arrange a question and answer session with Dr. Lowood. In our weekly meetings, we combined forces with the other IQP group to compile a list of questions to ask Dr. Lowood. Meanwhile, Nikki communicated with Dr.

Lowood via e-mail and scheduled a conference call with him. After extensive planning, we made the call on December 6th.

Over the course of the conversation, Dr. Lowood responded to all of the questions on our list. From speaking with him, we were able to gather some useful information that helped direct our project. Also, we discovered some issues that we had not previously touched on, such as donation preservation. For a full transcript of our questions and his answers, please see Appendices A2 and A3.

2.4.1 Key Ideas Gained from Discussion

One of the many relevant topics we discussed with Dr. Lowood was the organization of Stanford's game collections. According to Dr. Lowood, the Cabrinety Collection is only for materials collected during Stephen Cabrinety's lifetime and is essentially a closed collection. Because the Cabrinety collection is a special collection, the items in it do not circulate, and community members who wish to handle the items in it must go through a reasonable amount of process to do so.

In contrast, the items in the Green Media Room are meant to circulate in the same fashion as normal materials in Stanford's library. The materials are housed in a room that is open to all Stanford community members. Very little exists in terms of security; students simply leave their IDs with an attendant and check their bags before entering. As far as Dr. Lowood is aware, there have been almost no theft problems. Along with the media materials, the Media Room provides some space in which the students can play games.

Due to a combination of the room's policy of headphone use and the room's maintained academic atmosphere, game players do not cause any significant noise disruptions.

Ideally, our archive's organization will draw from both of these collections. Like the Cabrinity items, our materials are not meant to circulate. Yet, we hope to provide a space in which WPI community members can enjoy the materials we collect without having to wade through undue processes. We also do not want to disturb the atmosphere of the general library with our collection. Adopting Dr. Lowood's headphones policy would certainly decrease the likelihood of our game players disturbing our other library patrons.

2.4.2 Conclusion

Perhaps the most important thing we gained from speaking with Dr. Lowood was an appreciation of just how unique our archive will be. Because Stanford does not do anything to preserve the games in its collections, the lifespan of the games is inarguably finite. On the other hand, we have a strong interest in preservation, and hope to preserve our games indefinitely.

Another thing that sets us apart from Stanford is our dual focus on ephemeral and functional items. Though Stanford does maintain some ephemera, it is far from the focus of either archive. While we also want our archive to offer people the chance to play and experience old games, we also hope that the archive will resurrect the atmosphere culture in which the games were originally played and experienced as well.

In conclusion, we found speaking with Dr. Lowood to be very useful, though in a fashion different than we had first imagined. Future groups should consider him a valuable intellectual resource, and may wish to contact him in the future.

3. COLLECTIONS

To build a foundation of interesting items for the archive, we employed a number of different collection methods. Some of them, such as soliciting donations from game companies, did not yield noticeable results. Other methods, such as asking for donations from specific game designers, brought valuable and unique items into our collection. In this next section, we will discuss each of the collection methods we experimented with. For each method, we will explain how well it did or did not work, and explain why we would or would not recommend future IQP groups employ the method.

3.1 Donation Procedures

When we first began the project, we handled donations by simply bringing them to Rodney in the archive during meeting hours. As we began to solicit donations from outside sources, however, the need for a more organized approach to donations emerged.

Ideally, the donation system should make it easy for donors to give items to the archive and easy for Rodney to process and track incoming gifts. Our initial approach met neither of these two goals.

While considering a different donation approach, we went through a few ideas other than the one we settled on. At one point, we considered collecting donations by tabling in the Campus Center. Some merits of this idea are the advertising it provides for the archive and the ease it grants to donors. Despite these positive points, however, we felt that the negatives kept it from being a worthwhile idea. Specifically, we were concerned with

bookkeeping problems presented by this donation scheme. Collecting items in a drop box seems to imply that items will not be marked with donor names, which makes it impossible for Rodney to track donors and issue receipts to them.

Eventually, we settled on a very simple set of donation procedures. Potential donors contact the game archive mailing list with information about the items they wish to donate. This gives us a chance to determine whether or not we should include an item in our collection. If we decide we want an item, we contact the donor and arrange for him to either bring the item to the library or to have an IQP team member pick up the item. Once the item is in the archive, Rodney issues a receipt to the donor which may then be used for tax purposes. (We do not assess the value of items, however, so any tax write-offs must be computed by the donors themselves.)

At this time, we believe that this set of donation procedures should be adequate for future donations to the archive. If there is a sudden increase in the number of donations, however, increased traffic on the archive mailing list may become hard to deal with. Should this occur, it might be worthwhile to consider alternative donation procedures.

3.2 Collection Sources

At the time of this writing, we have only the beginnings of a collection of video-game related material. However, every item, even those which joined our collection close to its inception, must necessarily have come from somewhere; every item must have a source, whether it was donated or purchased. Some of these sources, such as campus advertising and purchases from the project budget, were discussed from the very beginning; other

sources, such as the Boston Post-Mortem and the IMGD Advisory Board, became obvious only as the project went on. As soon as the project started, we knew that we would probably need to put up fliers around campus to advertise our desire for donations; however, it was in the middle of B-term that Professor Finkel mentioned the Boston Post-Mortem as a good place to advertise our archive, and it was only when Steve Meretzky's visit was drawing near that we realized begging him for donations would be a good way to score top-quality items. The following sections detail what we did to secure both our pre-planned collection sources and our sources of opportunity.

3.2.1 Advertising

In hopes of generating further interest in the archive, we looked into different methods of advertising for it. Early in the project, we considered three advertising methods: table sitting (waiting at tables in the Campus Center as many other student groups do), Tech News articles, and flyers. Eventually, we scrapped the idea of table sitting because we felt that potential donors would be confused if we were advertising in the Campus Center but they had to take their donations over to the Library. So we ended up focusing on writing Tech News articles and generating flyers.

For the Tech News article, our audience was specifically the WPI community. We included information about the archive, our IQP, and the donation procedure.

Unfortunately, despite our attempts to make the article catch people's attention, we did not get a single donation as a result of it. While response to the article disappointed us, we would not write off the advertising method entirely. Rather, we think that an article might successfully bring in donations if it had a tie-in to a campus wide event, such as

Steve Meretzky's talk. The full text of the submitted Tech News article can be found in the “Games and Hardware” group’s process document, but we have included a draft of another article that was considered for submission in Appendix A6, in order to provide additional inspiration should future groups decide to advertise in the school newspaper.

To solicit donations from people both inside and outside of the WPI community, we created the flyer shown in Appendix A5. Most of the design work was done by a member of the other IQP group; however, we did make suggestions about the design. Once the flyers were complete, we helped distribute them. As a result of posting the flyers, we have received a few donations. Though the response has not been overwhelming, it has been appreciable. We would recommend hanging flyers in the future. Specifically, we would suggest flyering outside of the WPI campus. Some places we think may be good places to hang flyers are libraries at other Worcester colleges and local businesses (especially game-related ones such as That's Entertainment).

3.2.2 Steve Meretzky

On Thursday, December 8, 2005, the Gordon Library saw the official opening of the “Save the Princess: the History of Storytelling in Video Games” exhibit. To celebrate the grand opening, the library invited game designer Steve Meretzky to talk about the evolution of video game storytelling. Just before Mr. Meretzky's lecture, Brendan gave the speech shown in Appendix A7, announcing that our archive was open for donations.

Mr. Meretzky, creator of many classic adventure games such as Planetfall and the video game adaptation of The Hitchiker's Guide to the Galaxy, talked about the role of

storytelling in human history, drawing an interesting comparison between stories of ancient hunting parties and a modern day World of Warcraft hunt. Following the lecture and subsequent reception in the library, our IQP group took Mr. Meretzky out to dinner to get him interested in our nascent video game archive, and to persuade him to make a donation. He agreed to look into the possibility of donating material from some of his older works; a few weeks later, we had a box of old Infocom games and design documents. We are very grateful to Steve Meretzky for his early support of our archive.

3.2.3 Boston Post-Mortem

As part of our efforts to solicit donations for the archive, we took part in the December Boston Post-Mortem at the Skellig Pub in Waltham. Three people involved in the game archive attended the Post-Mortem: Dean O'Donnell (the other group's advisor), Nikki Benecke (our group), and Eric Sutman (the other group).

Prior to the evening's main lecture, we were given a chance to speak. First Dean O'Donnell provided a summary of the game archive and introduced Nikki Benecke. Then Nikki spoke about the archive in further detail and urged the gathered game developers to donate to the collection. In particular, she emphasized our interest in design documents, even those of seemingly little importance.

After our brief talk, we spent the rest of the evening mingling with the game developers in the pub. Several developers approached us and requested contact information for the archive, and we sought out some key attendees. Though many of the leads we gained at the Post-Mortem did not pan out, at least one of them did: Rick Goodman, who was

speaking at the Post-Mortem about the closing of the much-loved Stainless Steel Studios, spoke with Nikki several times throughout the evening and said he would consider donating design documents to the archive. A few days later, Nikki received an e-mail containing the rather interesting documents, which can now be viewed in the archive.

Overall, the Post-Mortem was an enjoyable event that led to some donations and some potential contact points. In order to make the Post-Mortem a lucrative event in terms of donations, however, we would need to establish more of a presence in the community. It might be possible to do this simply by attending more Post-Mortems and making a point to solicit donations whenever we go.

3.2.4 IMGD Advisory Board Contacts

At the beginning of C-term 2006, Professor Finkel suggested that we contact individuals on the Interactive Media and Game Development advisory board, hoping that the members of the board would be kind enough to either donate or spread word of our need for donations. Our subgroup contacted Ichiro Lambe of Dejobaan Games, Callan McNally of ATI, and Kent Quirk of Cognito. At the time of this writing, we have received no responses from anyone on the advisory board or from anyone who was referred to us by anyone on the board. The fault may be in the chosen medium of communication; each member's contact information was given as an email address, and each member was hailed through email. It is likely that our requests were picked up by a spam filter, lost in a sea of other mail, or simply ignored. The reason for the lack of response is not important, and the IMGD advisory board is still considered a valuable resource. We recommend that future groups find ways to contact board members more

directly. To this end, Rodney has graciously offered to allow letters to be sent using his official WPI letterhead.

3.2.5 Purchases

Once we realized that donations weren't going to be arriving in the volume we anticipated, we decided to come up with a plan to handle purchases. Buying items may become a necessity when considering adding to the collection with newer items, such as the Doom board game, and particularly rare items, such as those given out only to the first hundred people in line for a new game. Our current procedure for making a purchase for the collection is simple; seek items through ordinary means, such as game stores for items that are commercially available or eBay for rare items that are only available from other collectors, and create a “wish list.” If an item is found to fit in with the tier system, or if it is likely to one day become a worthy item when most people have largely forgotten about it, add the item's details to the wish list along with a justification for the purchase. Rodney will take the wish list and get permission from his superiors to make the purchase on behalf of the library. Writing a small justification for each item or group of items should be considered a necessity, so that Rodney has a greater chance of getting approval for the purchase.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 What We Have Accomplished

Over the course of our project, our group accomplished six main tasks. We:

- Helped establish a mission statement for the archive
- Put together collection guidelines
- Established a donation procedure
- Advertised for the archive
- Made contacts in the game industry
- Secured a number of donations

Though we have already discussed the details of each of these previously, we will briefly summarize them again here.

4.1.1 Helped Establish a Mission Statement for the Archive

What did we do: We first decided on what we would like the archive to become, then wrote a statement that described this ideal. After that, we merged our view with the other group's view, and revised the resulting statement until it became clear and concise.

Why is it important: Without knowing what kind of archive we wished to create, we could not make informed decisions about what items would or would not fit in our collection, nor could we adequately guess at what actions we needed to take to bring the archive into being. By writing the mission statement, we provided a clear direction for the archive and our IQP to proceed in.

4.1.2 Put Together Collection Guidelines

What did we do: Working closely with the other group, we co-authored a tier system which ranks types of donations by desirability. We then worked to clearly define each level of the tier system.

Why is it important: Once the archive is fully active, we may have funding available to purchase items for it. Because we may not have much funding, it is important that we only spend money on items which significantly advance the goals of the archive. By creating the tier system, we have created a reference guide for quickly determining whether or not an item is worth buying for the collection. Similarly, referring to the tier system quickly reveals whether or not an item has any place in the collection.

4.1.3 Established a Donation Procedure

What did we do: Working with Rodney, we helped determine a system in which donors could give us items with a minimum amount of complication without causing any processing complications on our end.

Why is it important: By creating a donation procedure, we have made it possible for donors to receive consistent treatment when donating items. We have also lessened the complications of receiving donations for Rodney.

4.1.4 Advertised for the Archive

What did we do: Via public appearances, flyers, articles, and e-mails, we solicited donations for the archive.

Why is it important: Naturally, advertising for the archive increased the number of donations we received. Along with that, it also made the WPI community more aware of the existence of the archive, and increased enthusiasm for the project.

4.1.5 Made Contacts in the Game Industry

What did we do: While advertising, we contacted and encountered a number of game industry professionals and sought to interest them in our archive.

Why is it important: Some of our most interesting donations to date have come from industry professionals, and we hope that many more will follow. Along with providing us with material goods, industry professionals who are excited about our project may pass the word along to others and help increase interest in the archive.

4.1.6 Secured a number of donations

What did we do: Over the past three terms, we acquired a number of donations from a variety of outside sources.

Why is it important: Without any items, we would have no archive, obviously. On top of that, we feel that it is important to build a solid foundation of donations for the archive, in order to attract future patrons.

4.2 What Still Needs to be Done

Over the course of our project we managed to accomplish a lot; however, the nature of an archival project is that it takes a long time to develop and mature. While we accomplished all of our main goals and set the foundation for a comprehensive video

game archive, we did encounter some difficulty and unexpected set backs, and simply did not have time to accomplish all we wanted to. We hope that next year's IQP group will be able to build on what we have already accomplished and work on some of the areas that we feel the collection is currently lacking.

The first task future groups must work on is the never-ending goal of collecting items. We found that ephemera is harder to obtain than games through normal advertising means, and because of that our current collection has many more games than ephemera items. People who work on the archive in the future need to dedicate a lot of time establishing connections with both game companies and individual developers to attempt to expand the collection.

The second task we would like future groups to accomplish is to establish a set of preservation guidelines. This is the one task if any that we did not accomplish enough of. We started concentrating on specific preservation issues fairly late in the project and were not able to accomplish much. Future groups will need to establish guidelines on how to preserve what is intended to be a useable collection. They will also need to work out the legalities of creating copies of the games for public use, and storing images of games digitally. This will not be an easy task, and should be a huge part of any future project.

The third task future groups need to accomplish is to develop guidelines that explain the procedures for actually using the collected items. One of our major goals on this project is to create a teaching archive that professors and students can use. Guidelines for this

use still need to be created. Also as a subtask working with the library to find a space to store and display the collection is very important. We have been working without a solid idea as to how much space is available for our collection. In the future, as the collection grows, storage and security will become increasingly important. We hope that our collection will be used as the foundation for a gaming lab much like they have at Stanford. Finding space on campus for the gaming lab is an obstacle that needs to be overcome.

The fourth task for future groups should be to review the tier system document. One of the results of our archive being split into two projects is that we had to work together on the archive guidelines. The tier system document was created with a high priority on Design Documents but with a very low priority on all other ephemera related items. We did not expect ephemera items to be so hard to acquire at the time we created the tier system. As we reflect on the work we did, this is one of the items that stands out as being incorrect. We feel that future groups should go over the tier system and re-organize the priority levels given for some of the items now that we have more information on how available the different types of items are.

The final task is advertising. The one thing that stood out the most from the interview with Professor Lowood was how well known and high profile Stanford's collection is. The more you advertise, the better your chances get of acquiring some really impressive items. You cannot advertise enough.

Collecting and advertising are tasks that will hopefully continue for a long time across many project groups, however the usage guidelines and preservation guidelines should be created as soon as possible. It is impossible to address the display and storage issues without these two very important guidelines. Preservation is going to be a major factor in storage space, and Usage requirements are a major factor when displaying the collection. If future groups continue to work on these five tasks we feel that the archive's current weaknesses will be overcome and the archive will grow in accordance with our mission statement.

APPENDIX A1. DIVISION OF LABOR PAPER

At our previous meeting on October 27, both groups decided that the two best ways to divide the work of assembling a Video Game Archive were Collection vs. Setup and Games vs. Ephemera. In order to facilitate the process of making a final decision between the two, our subgroup chose to exploit the fact that on some level, both methods must accomplish the same thing. Either method will result in a collection of games and ephemera, regardless of who collected them and who set them up. The only real differences are in the process of creating the collection, specifically in the way each method deals with how the setup of the collection depends on the collection of the materials. In short, we need to collect at least some video game material before we can set it up, so how might these methods do things differently?

In the first possible division method, Collection vs. Setup, the first group is focused entirely on the collection aspect while the second group focuses entirely on the aspect of setting it all up. In this scenario, it seems that the second group needs input from the first group in order to be productive. This may create tension if the first group is not able to maintain a consistent flow of collected materials to the second, instead dumping a large pile of materials on the second group near the end of the project. However, this method may be more efficient if the groups feel that this is not an issue; theoretically, each group will only get better at their task, because they are focusing on doing only one thing at a time.

In the second possible division, Games vs. Ephemera, there are essentially two smaller projects. Both groups need to focus on all aspects of collection development, but on a smaller scale. One group would collect and set up a game collection, while the other would collect and set up an ephemera collection. If the two collections could be kept separate until it comes time to put them together in the library, then the potential problem of group dependence mentioned in the previous paragraph could be avoided. However, if they are kept too separate, we may run into the problem of the two projects being entirely out of sync; it would seem a bit awkward to have a large collection of game-related items advertising games that are not in the collection.

Our subgroup favors the second method, because the division of labor seems clearer, and because it should foster cooperation instead of dependence. Both groups would be doing essentially the same collection process on different items, so there are more opportunities to share advice on how to go about doing something if one group gets stuck. This would probably not happen in the first method, because it calls for the groups to do very different things, leaving one group of three people with one less resource. As for which aspect to cover, games or ephemera, we as a subgroup have no preference, and we will accept the outcome of a coin toss to settle the question if it becomes necessary.

APPENDIX A2. QUESTIONS FOR HENRY LOWOOD

A2.1 Donations and Obtaining Materials for the Green Library

- Do you accept donations, and if so, do you have a set of concrete guidelines that you follow for determining which donations you will accept?
- Have you ever rejected a donation? If so, why?
- Do you solicit donations at all, or do you passively accept them?
- Do you purchase items specifically for the collection? If so, where does the money for purchases come from?
- Do you give a higher value to original items or functional items?

A2.2 Preservation for the Green Library and Stephen Cabrinety Collections

- Do the older consoles undergo any kind of maintenance to extend their operating life, or are they expected to be used until they no longer work?
- What about older game cartridges and disks?

A2.3 Legal Issues for Both Collections

- What IP issues did you run into when creating the collection and how were they solved?
- Are ROMs used in your collection? If so, how did you acquire them and how are they used?

A2.4 Usage

- How much of the collection is currently available to the public?
- Are the policies for this collection any different from the regular special collection policies at Stanford?

A2.5 Security

- Are there security measures in place to prevent theft, and has anyone ever stolen anything?

A2.6 Space

- How much of an issue is space?
- What options do you have if you run out of display or storage space?

Noise Issues for the Green Library

- How is the noise from the video game collection kept from disturbing the rest of the Media Microtext Center?
- Did the opening of the collection cause a significant change in the atmosphere of the Media Microtext Center?

APPENDIX A3. HENRY LOWOOD CONFERENCE CALL NOTES

A3.1 Cabrinity Collection vs. Green Media Room

1.) Cabrinity is a historical collection. It's more or less a closed collection. Like most special collections, the materials don't circulate. People have to go through the usual special collections hoops to gain access to the materials.

A3.2 Donations

A3.2.1 Lowood on Donations

- 1.) Stanford does accept donations. For the most part, new donations go into the Media Room and not into the Cabinetry Collection.
- 2.) Lowood says the guidelines at Stanford do exist but aren't particularly concrete. He has three groups of items he'll generally accept:
 - Quality games - games that collect good reviews, that have widespread appreciation among gamers.
 - Impactful games - games that aren't necessarily great games, but which have a significant impact on the game industry. For example, he mentioned:
 - The Harry Potter video games. Not the best games ever, but they had great sales, which pushed game companies to collaborate further with the movie industry.
 - The Tiger Woods game that EA did. EA had to look at how to simulate Tiger Woods' swing, and that changed the way that they looked at the physics in their sports games.
 - Pop culture games - games that aren't necessarily good and don't necessarily impact the game industry, but which have become part of popular culture. (He couldn't think of an example in games, though he mentioned an example from TV would be Star Trek. Not, in his mind, a "good" show... but everyone knows Star Trek, it has infiltrated society. Etc.)
- 3.) He notes that he doesn't necessarily reject things that don't fall into these three categories. For example, he says, if EA calls him up and offers him all of last year's titles for free, he'll gladly take them all, even if they're duds.
- 4.) Since the Green Media collection does circulate and is intended for use, we can assume that he does give precedence to functional items.

A3.2.2 Lowood on Purchasing Items for the Collection

- 1.) Stanford does provide him with some manner of budget to purchase new material for the archive. He was not entirely clear on how much money they spend per year on games, but he did suggest to us that even on a "small budget, 5k or so a year" one can afford to buy 50-100 games a year for the collection.
- 2.) He implied that he makes purchases based on the same criteria as donations. It sounded like the Stanford collection is based more on purchased items than on donated items.

A3.2.3 Lowood on Design Material Donations

- 1.) He noted that he has had very limited success acquiring donations of game design materials for Stanford's collection. He says that companies have been very uncooperative about even letting him see game design materials. His overall feeling is that in the game industry, people worry about giving away anything that they might possibly be able to use again.
- 2.) He suggests that PC game companies may be easier to solicit donations from than console game companies. He says console companies are "very tough."
- 3.) Also, he provides this advice: "Don't start at the top... don't go to the CEO and ask him for things... always try to find individuals in the company and contact them directly."
- 4.) Along with the warnings, he also noted that he has had a bit of success. Stanford has the original source code for EssexMUD (one of the first MUDs), as given to him by Richard Bartle. We might look into contacting Bartle/seeing if he would be willing to give us a copy for our collection as well.
- 5.) Lowood also suggests that we keep an eye out on eBay for game design materials. He's obtained some design materials from there himself.

A3.3 Preservation

- 1.) According to Lowood, within Stanford's library, very little is being done in terms of preservation. (He did not say if this was limited by technology or something else.)
- 2.) Lowood says: "The chances of a lovingly preserved Nintendo 64 cartridge being playable on anything a hundred years from now are incredibly slim." In his mind, it does not make sense to try to preserve the physical copies of the games, as they will be obsolete at some point. Instead, he thinks that the main focus in preservation should be on ROMs.
- 3.) As far as we understand, Stanford doesn't actually provide any ROMs. They only have actual games.

A3.4 Legal Issues

- 1.) Lowood says that the exemption that allows the Internet Archive to maintain ROMs of games is not an exemption specific to the IA, but rather to libraries in general. He urged us to look into whether or not this exemption would apply to us as well.
- 2.) He noted that it is the ROMs (and not the emulators) that are generally the target for legal actions.
- 3.) Also, he suggested that we might look into getting a subscription to GameTap for the library. "They [GameTap's makers] seemed amenable to the idea that universities might subscribe to GameTap."

A3.5 Usage

- 1.) As mentioned before, Lowood says that the Cabinetry Collection is a special collection and that items don't circulate. The Media Room's materials are both in circulation and available for play at stations set up in the Room. They are open to the entire Stanford community.
- 2.) Lowood says that the entire Media Center (which has other media such as DVDs, CDs, etc.) accounts for 40% of circulation in the whole library. He does not know what percentage of the 40% is game circulation.
- 3.) He does say that the games make up about 10% of the available materials in the Media Center.

A3.6 Security

A3.6.1 On Theft...

- 1.) According to Lowood, there archive has yet to have many significant theft issues. He says that occasionally, controllers and cables disappear. He was not aware of any games being stolen.
- 2.) Stanford does not have a special anti-theft system set up for this archive. In fact, they do not have a special anti-theft system for the library. They don't have a barcode scanner. They take three measures to prevent theft in the Media Center:
 - On entering the room, you have to give up your ID for the duration of your visit. Lowood believes this discourages theft, as a noticed theft during the period around your visit would naturally be associated with you.
 - Stanford's fines for overdue or unreturned materials are really, really stiff, according to Lowood. He thinks fear of fines ensures that people really bring back the stuff they take out.
 - He mentioned also that they have bag check at the library. It makes sense that theft is harder if one doesn't have anywhere to hide the stolen

goods.

A3.6.2 Some Other Security Issues

- 1.) Software keys are sometimes lost by the people who scan the items in and put them into the database, and by people who scan the items in and out for circulation. He says that sometimes the people doing the scanning don't understand the significance of the packaging and just throw the keys away.
- 2.) Software keys could potentially be stolen, even if a material is returned on time and intact. He does not know of a problem with this, but does mention that it is a concern.
- 3.) Some classes use games, and some students come to the Media Room to play the games for classes. Stanford has had issues where students have saved over each other's saves!

A3.7 Space

- 1.) Lowood says, "We have... close to an issue, but for the whole media center. Games are only about 10% of that. Most of it is DVDs." He did not specify the size of the room(s).
- 2.) He noted that games are re-housed when they are added to the collection. That is to say, they are not shelved in their original packaging, but rather in smaller, more space-efficient boxes. This is very beneficial in terms of saving space, according to Lowood.
- 3.) Along with the actual game materials, the Media Room also has stations set up for playing the games. So, space is apparently not an incredibly big issue, even with all the other media stored there.

A3.8 Atmosphere and Noise

- 1.) To prevent noise from the games themselves, gamers wear headphones while playing.
- 2.) Lowood says that there is virtually no issue with noise from the players talking amongst themselves. He notes that while groups often go to the lab to play games together for classes, they seem to be well-behaved. He believes that because they are playing for an academic activity, they are naturally more serious, less rowdy.
- 3.) He also says that there isn't a problem with the grad students who show up to play the games for fun. They wear the headphones and aren't too noisy.

APPENDIX A4. MISSION, SCOPE, AND PRIORITY SYSTEM

A4.1 Mission Statement

To preserve video games and related materials, in order to provide an insight into the unique culture that formed around video games, and to provide an educational resource.

A4.2 Scope

Based on our priority system, we will obtain video games and related materials. In addition, we will make the materials available for use in a designated area in the library.

A4.3 Priority System

Tier 1: Materials in this tier merit active pursuit, based on their exceptional characteristics. Qualifying items are exceptional in one or more of these categories:

Fame/Infamy: The media frequently points at the item as an example of some quality. Games that are often referred to as the “best” or “worst” of a genre fall under this heading.

Age: The item is at least twenty years old.

Rarity: The item is difficult or impossible to obtain through normal channels. Consoles that are no longer manufactured and limited edition games fall under this heading.

Quality: The item is of high quality, as evidenced by a wealth of positive reviews or awards.

Uniqueness: This item represents an idea that has never been implemented again, or which had never been implemented prior to this item’s implementation. Innovative games and input devices fall under this heading.

Tier 2: Materials in this tier do not merit active pursuit. In the event that these items are donated, we will accept them. We will also purchase them if they are packaged with first tier items. Qualifying items for this tier are limited to games, consoles, and input devices.

Tier 3: Materials in this tier are designed to provide assistance to people using the items in the upper tiers. Such items include:

- Strategy Guides
- Maps
- Cheat Codes
- Game Sharks/Game Genies

Tier 4: Materials in this tier do not necessarily serve a functional purpose. These items are part of the collection because they add to the atmosphere of the archive and provide insight into video game culture. Items in this tier include video game related ephemera such as action figures, posters, DVDs, comic books, and toys.

APPENDIX A5. FLYER



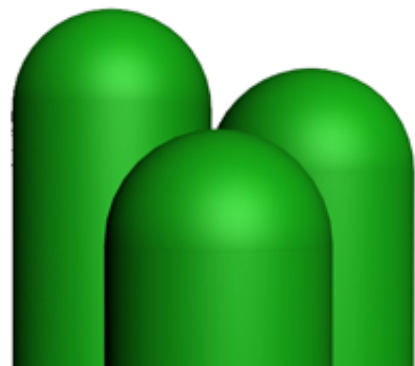
Got a Garage Full of Cartridges?

The Gordon Library at
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
is organizing a Special Games Archive
and needs your help!

We are looking for donations of
original, functional copies of:

Games, both Console and Computer
Game Systems
System Accessories
Manuals, Maps, Strategy Guides
Any Game-Related Posters, Toys, Models, Novels, Cards, etc.
Design Documents

For information on donating
to the Special Games Archive,
send an e-mail to:
game-archives@wpi.edu



APPENDIX A6. TECH NEWS ARTICLE, DRAFT TWO

What would you give for a chance at immortality? Give up all your video game stuff, you say? Well, now's your chance! The WPI Archives and Special Collections is looking to relieve you of all your excess video games, consoles, and paraphernalia, in order to pool them into a collective celebration of electronic entertainment. Upon donation, your name will be latched onto it and it will be viewed by all so that your significance will always be remembered. Acceptable donations include, but are not limited to: PC/platform games, consoles, controllers, strategy guides, manuals, books, and collectibles. Backup copies will not be accepted. We appreciate donations that are in a good and functional state.

The purpose of this request is to set up a collection to preserve video games and related materials, in order to provide an insight into the culture that is formed around gaming and to make available an educational resource for future game developers. Once established, the collection will be open for public use and we hope that you will find time to express your interest in helping us making this collection a reality.

If you have donations, please contact:

game-archives@wpi.edu

APPENDIX A7. SALES PITCH

Hello, my name is Brendan Perry; I'm a Junior here at WPI and am one of 6 IQP students working with Professor Finkel, Professor O'Donnell, and Rodney Obien, WPI's Archivist and Curator of Special collections, to create a Special Collection of Video Games and Game Materials for the WPI archives.

The archive is being created to preserve video games and related materials, in order to provide an insight into the unique culture that formed around video games, and to provide an educational resource.

Tonight as you view the Save the Princess Exhibit, you will see some items that are not from the Stanford collection, and are actually the starting point for our own collection. We have been working for the past two terms on a lot of the technical side of creating a collection, which includes creating a mission statement, a scope paper, and a documented collection process. And we are now at the point where we are asking individuals to look around their homes, basements, attics and garages, and donate whatever they can to our collection.

We are looking for almost anything video game related that you can find. Our top priority is finding working games and consoles. We are also looking for any video game related items that people have. Examples would be game design documents, interesting accessories, t-shirts, coffee mugs, and life size statues of Master Chief.